



Australian Institute of Architects

ACT Chapter

April 2018

**Submission to the
Environment, Planning
and Sustainable
Development Directorate
and the National Capital
Authority**

**City and
Gateway
Draft Urban
Design
Framework**

SUBMISSION BY

Australian Institute of Architects
ABN 72 000 023 012

ACT Chapter
2a Mugga Way, Red Hill ACT 2603
PO Box 3373 Manuka ACT 2603
Telephone: 02 6121 2010
Email: leanne.hardwicke@architecture.com.au

PURPOSE

This submission is made by the ACT Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) to the ACT Government, Environment and Planning Directorate to provide comments on the City and Gateway Draft urban Design Framework.

Comments have been prepared by the ACT Chapter Planning Committee.

At the time of this submission, the ACT Chapter President of the Institute is Philip Leeson.

The ACT Chapter Executive Director is Leanne Hardwicke.

INFORMATION

The Institute is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with around 12,000 members across Australia and overseas and represents around 320 individual architects representing small and large practices within the ACT.

The Institute works to improve our built environment by promoting quality, responsible, sustainable design.

The Institute exists to enhance the cultural, environmental and economic well-being of the community by:

- advancing contemporary practice and the professional capability of members, and
- advocating the value of architecture and architects

1. INTRODUCTION

The following comments are made by the Australian Institute of Architects, ACT Chapter, (the Institute) on behalf of its 320 members. The Institute appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments on the draft urban design framework.

2. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Institute supports the initiative to provide opportunities for more intense development along key public transport routes within the existing urban area of Canberra. This will provide for additional housing, communal and commercial spaces without the need to further expand the urban footprint of the city.

We applaud the strong focus on the quality of the streetscape to be provided and the contribution to the green infrastructure of the city. We fully support the focus on providing an environment where moving through the city is made a pleasant experience, promoting active travel and use of public transport and social interaction.

It is critical that in increasing the density of the existing urban area that close attention is paid to the provision of a high level of amenity. The streetscape controls and the attention to activating frontages is a major contribution to this. However, there also needs to be a highly developed strategy for generating outdoor recreational and social areas that are not tied to commercial activities and providing space for the day to day informal enjoyment of the green infrastructure of the city.

While there is some reference to creation of destination parks within existing open areas that are currently reserves for sports fields, waterways, school grounds, this is one of the less well developed aspects of the gateway proposal. There is no allocation of additional recreational space or parkland.

The existing open spaces can be enhanced by substantial investment in both upgrading of the landscape to provide for recreational uses such as barbecues and picnics, informal and natural play areas and recreation, in addition to improving stormwater management and improving living green infrastructure. However, there also needs to be clear goals for additional usable open green and social space within the city beyond reliance on the streets. Most of the communal spaces already marked are currently allocated for uses that limit their modification for more diverse recreational functions by their existing uses. The demand for the existing uses is likely to rise rather than diminish with an additional 37,000 households.

It is disappointing to see that there is no provision for additional public space within the Dickson hub. The small pocket park indicated appears to be confined to the easement area of the stormwater drain and does not take the opportunity to recover the surface carpark area to provide a larger park. There is also no other indication of a public square within the centre to provide for informal free social and recreational use for the additional households or workers in the hub.

It is recommended that the urban village frameworks be reviewed to include clearly defined future public open green space that will enhance the amenity of the areas and can be a focus for social / community facilities and activities. Similarly more detailed consideration to how informal recreation and activities such as barbecues will be provided for throughout or in close proximity to the development.

When defining space that will be needed, there is an opportunity in the suburbs behind the avenue to introduce the missing middle dual occupancy townhouse and terrace forms. This will enhance their density consistent with their lower-scale, landscaped character. This will also create demand for recreational open space in the future. If it is intended that this level of amenity is to be provided within larger developments along the avenue, this should be explicitly set out as a strategic requirement.

Another key role of this green infrastructure is the collection, detention capture and gradual release or reuse of stormwater from normal and extreme events. The flooding experienced in February 2018 demonstrated the need for this to be considered in the allocation and design of greenspace and detention ponds. This provides an opportunity for enhancement of the green infrastructure as seen in Dickson and Lyneham through wetlands that provide a social and recreational focus as well as the buffer for storm events.

3. SUSTAINABILITY

While there are generic statements about the need for buildings to be sustainable it is disappointing that given the planned increased density, enhanced performance through defined targets are not included. Targets such as minimum 5 star Green Star would drive increased focus on energy and water efficiency. Targets on minimisation of any increase in Urban Heat Island effects could be introduced through design of the landscape and building envelope. Increased density of development needs to generate improved energy and water use outcomes to provide ongoing sustainability benefits.

4. SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

To generate development opportunities, a substantial amount of public housing has been removed from the central area of the city through the sale of large public housing sites. Affordable and public housing needs to be provided within the central areas as well as in dispersed locations throughout the city. The Gateway development has the advantage of close access to public and active transport links to the city centre and urban villages. It is logical to provide social resources and government service points for the whole community and it is an ideal location for inclusion of affordable housing and public housing.

Targets and strategies for the provision of affordable housing and community facilities should be set out within the City and Gateway framework as this is a key part of the social equity character and sustainability of the framework. Targets for affordable housing in Central Canberra should reflect the percentage of people needed to provide a workforce in the area whose wages will put them into the affordable housing need category.

The location is one that can enhance the affordability through access to resources and public transport provided there is a level of embedded amenity and recreational space that does not require pay to play. A built form designed to minimise ongoing costs related to energy and water, while maintaining comfortable healthy living conditions will benefit all new residents, but is particularly valuable to those in the lower two quintiles of income who need to maximise disposable income from limited resources.

The proposal to increase the height permissible could provide a mechanism through inclusive zoning requirements or commitment of a percentage of funding derived from capturing increased land value through the Lease Variation Charges to some defined sites for development by community housing providers for contributions to both affordable housing and community facilities.

As an example of the latter, key commitments to the community about community facilities such as the retention of the Dickson Pool should be noted. Demand on this facility will increase as it provides a major social resource and destination for the community and this should be acknowledged in the planning to ensure associated requirements and opportunities are captured and the community can have a sense of emerging social richness within the area. Part of this discussion should also be about the provision, location and role of future school facilities and their function as community resources in this corridor to meet the needs of the additional 37000 households.

5. CONCLUSION

The Institute supports the proposed increase in density defined within the City and Gateway Urban Design Framework provided there is a high level of amenity embedded. We take the opportunity to make the following recommendations.

- Increasing the space allocated to parks throughout the area and public green open space within the urban villages.
- Developing and articulating the strategy for use and enhancement of the existing green open spaces to provide clear guidance to the community on how the increased demand for parkland and informal recreational space and facilities will be managed, while maintaining the required space for sports and school grounds.
- Implementing a strategy for the management of stormwater to avoid the flooding experienced in extreme events that is tied to design of green spaces to provide enhanced recreational and biodiversity support opportunities.
- Setting targets and strategies within the urban design framework to deliver affordable housing into the City and Gateway and adjoining areas to meet the demand assessed against the estimated workforce required in Central Canberra whose households are likely to be in the lower two quintiles.
- Outlining proposals for the provision and role of key community facilities such as new schools, Dickson Pool and community centres in the Gateway development, to define the commitment to the social sustainability of the area.

-
- Considering opportunities to increase density in the adjoining RZ1 and RZ2 areas through the introduction of low scale terrace townhouse, dual occupancy and other individually titled housing stock when assessing demands on community and green infrastructure.

If you would like further information on any aspect of this submission or on related matters, please contact the ACT Chapter Executive Director, Leanne Hardwicke on (02) 6121 2010 or email: leanne.hardwicke@architecture.com.au
